

**To:** Editor

**From:** State Rep. Jennifer L. Mann, D-Lehigh

**Re:** Sex crimes against children should be part of legislative discussions on Sept. 26

Legislative leaders in the state House have agreed to dedicate the Sept. 26 session day to discuss possible solutions for preventing the gun and drug crimes that have continued to threaten residents in so many of our municipalities.

While I fully support this action, I think we need to broaden the scope and discuss how to prevent other criminal activities, particularly sexual and violent crimes against children. I have sponsored several pieces of legislation that would help parents and communities protect their children from the mental and physical damage that can occur as a result of these crimes.

House Bill 1900 would eliminate the time limits for prosecuting rape and sexual crimes committed against adults, and H.B. 1901 would remove the statute of limitations for rape and sexual assault crimes committed against minors. Under current law, these crimes cannot be pursued by law enforcement more than 12 years after the alleged incident.

In most cases of sexual assault, victims know their attackers and are less likely to go to police or seek support from a family member, friend or other reliable source. Additionally, many children are abused by a trusted adult and are often unable or too afraid to report these atrocious crimes when they take place. We need to remove the statute of limitations to give peace of mind to victims and ensure that sexually violent criminals, no matter when they committed their crimes, do not slip through the cracks and are brought to justice.

Our communities are concerned about the state's ability to adequately track sexual predators and enforce registration requirements for convicted sex offenders. Because Pennsylvania's online sexual offenders' registry requires only basic information about the offender's location, many families are not armed with sufficient information about the presence of a sex offender in their community.

House Bill 2364 would require all lifetime registrants and sex offenders to include their specific street address along with other required information on the state sexual offenders' registration list. A companion bill, H.B. 2365, would increase the penalty for failing to comply with these requirements to a third-degree felony, which carries a sentence of up to a year in prison and \$2,500 in fines.

The Committee of the Whole on Crime needs to address these bills and make them part of the larger discussion on how to protect Pennsylvania's citizens, especially our children.

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